

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 005184

FOLLOWING REPEAT LONDON 00272 ACTION SECSTATE INFO AMMAN BEIRUT
CAIRO DAMASCUS TEL AVIV BAGHDAD JAN 6

QUOTE: C O N F I D E N T I A L LONDON 00272

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1 AND 2

TAGS: PINS, PLO, UK

SUBJECT: ASSASSINATION OF PLO REP SAID HAMMAMI

REF: LONDON 131

1. PUBLIC STATEMENTS BY COMMANDER NEVILLE OF THE
SCOTLAND YARD ANTI-TERRORIST SQUAD YESTERDAY GAVE
NO INDICATION THAT HE HAS A SUSPECT IN THE CASE OF
THE MURDER OF PLO LONDON REPRESENTATIVE SAID HAMMAMI.
SCOTLAND YARD CONTINUES TO DESCRIBE KILLER AS "OF
MIDDLE EASTERN APPEARANCE."

2. MOST SPECIFIC ALLEGATION OF A SUSPECT IS STORY
IN JANUARY 6 GUARDIAN BY ITS PALESTINIAN AFFAIRS EXPERT
DAVID HIRST IN BEIRUT. HE REPORTS THAT THERE IS
LITTLE DOUBT THAT THE CHIEF SUSPECT IN THE EYES OF
ARAFAT AND THE MAIN-STREAM GUERRILLA LEADERSHIP OF
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THE PLO IS "THE IRAQI-BASED RENEGADE ABU NIDAL,
WHO ALONG WITH...HADDAD IS THE OUTSTANDING PRACTITIONER
OF PURE, UNBRIDLED TERRORISM IN THE RESISTANCE
MOVEMENT." HIRST CONTINUES THAT NOT LONG AFTER
NEWS OF THE MURDER, PLO MONITORS IN BEIRUT PICKED
UP AN ITEM ON VOICE OF PALESTINE BROADCASTING FROM
BAGHDAD ANNOUNCING HAMMAMIS DEATH. HIRST STATES, "THIS

PARTICULAR VOICE OF PALESTINE IS REALLY THE VOICE
OF ABU NIDAL."

3. HIRST NOTES ABU NIDAL ALLEGEDLY ATTEMPTED TO KILL
PLO MODERATE KHALID AL-HASSAN, AND IN 1976 TOLD
HIRST THAT "INTER-ARAB TERRORISM, HOWEVER REGRETTABLE,
WAS THE PRICE THAT HAD TO BE PAID FOR PRECIPITATING
THE ALL-EMBRACING ARAB REVOLUTION THAT ALONE COULD
LEAD TO THE LIBERATION OF PALESTINE." HIRST CONTINUES
THAT ABU NIDAL RUNS A TRAINING CAMP THREE HOURS
OUTSIDE OF BAGHDAD AND COULD NOT OPERATE WITHOUT
THE ASSISTANCE OF THE IRAQI BAATHIST REGIME. HIRST
QUOTES PLO OFFICIALS AS SAYING ABU NIDAL HAS A MUCH
STRONGER FOLLOWING AMONG PALESTINIAN STUDENTS IN
BRITAIN THAN IN ANY OTHER EUROPEAN COUNTRY.

4. STORY CONTINUES TO BE A MAIN FRONT PAGE ITEM IN
THE QUALITY BRITISH PRESS. LATTER REPORTS THAT
FOUR "SENIOR OFFICIALS" OF THE PLO ARRIVED IN LONDON
NIGHT OF JANUARY 5 IN CONNECTION WITH THE KILLING,
INCLUDING REBHI AWAD, FORMER PLO REP IN CAIRO;
NIZAR AMMAR, AND NABIL RAMLAWI, WHO REPORTEDLY WAS
BEING GROOMED TO REPLACE HAMMAMI WHEN PLO PLANNED
TO TRY TO SEND THE LATTER TO WASHINGTON. PRESS
REPORTS THE FOUR WERE MET AT HEATHROW AIRPORT BY
ALGERIAN AMBASSADOR BRAHIMI, AS WELL AS POLICE
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"SPECIAL BRANCH" WHO QUESTIONED THEM ON PURPOSE OF
THEIR VISIT. PRESS QUOTES COMMANDER NEVILLE AS
STATING POLICE WOULD NOT WELCOME A PLO INVESTIGATION, AND
THAT "WE ARE VERY WILLING TO SPEAK TO ANYBODY
WHO MIGHT BE ABLE TO HELP US. BUT THE ONLY PEOPLE
MAKING THE INVESTIGATION ARE THE POLICE."

5. FCO PRESS SPOKESMAN STATED THAT HMG IS "VERY
SADDENED" BY DEATH AND THAT EVERYTHING POSSIBLE IS
BEING DONE TO APPREHEND THOSE RESPONSIBLE. FCO
DESK OFFICER ON JANUARY 6 HAD NO FURTHER INFORMATION
FOR US OTHER THAN WHAT HAD APPEARED IN PRESS,
BUT DID EXPRESS PARTICULAR INTEREST IN ABU NIDAL
STORY. WE UNDERSTAND THAT BRITISH SECURITY AUTHOR-
ITIES ARE INCREASINGLY CONVINCED THAT KILLING WAS
ACT OF PALESTINIAN REJECTIONIST ORGANIZATIONS,
SPECIFIC SPONSORSHIP UNKNOWN, BUT MOST LIKELY THE
ABU NIDAL GROUP OR THE PFLP.

6. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH THIS FACTOR DOES NOT APPEAR
TO HAVE BEEN BROUGHT OUT BY THE PRESS, HAMMAMI WAS
A PROMINENT PARTICIPANT IN THE PALESTINIAN SEMINAR

IN LONDON LAST OCTOBER 1 (77 LONDON 16432). THIS
WAS BILLED AS THE FIRST PUBLIC MEETING BETWEEN PLO
MODERATES SUCH AS HAMMAMI AND SARTAWI AND PROMINENT
ISRAELI DOVES. HAMMAMI'S CLEAR IDENTIFICATION AS A
RELATIVE MODERATE WOULD SUPPORT THE THEORY THAT THE
KILLING WAS ORDERED BY THE REJECTIONISTS. FOLLOWING
ON THE ASSASSINATION IN LONDON OF YEMENI STATESMAN
HAJRI BY A PALESTINIAN LAST YEAR, AND THE AS YET
UNEXPLAINED BOMB EXPLOSION WHICH KILLED TWO MEMBERS
OF THE SYRIAN EMBASSY HERE IN THEIR CAR IN CENTRAL
LONDON LAST SATURDAY DECEMBER 31, LONDON MAY BE
EXPERIENCING AN OUTBREAK OF POLITICALLY-INSPIRED
VIOLENCE IN THE VERY LARGE ARAB POPULATION OF THE CITY.

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BREWSTER UNQUOTE VANCE

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